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Civil Information and Intelligence Fusion: Making “Non-Traditional” into “New Traditional” for the JTF Commander

by Martin J. Lindenmayer

In today’s operational environment, theorists and practitioners of irregular warfare (IW) realize that understanding the civilian population is as critical to a successful campaign as traditional intelligence. Still, civil information is not *universally* accessible by intelligence professionals and intelligence organizations frequently do not dedicate enough effort to support the process of integrating unclassified civil information (e.g. religion, values, economy, infrastructure, etc) into the intelligence picture presented to the JTF Commander. In every theater, Commanders have developed non-doctrinal organizations uniquely suited to their mission in an effort to integrate socio-cultural information into military decision-making processes. A prime example of a non-traditional organization is the Stability Operations Information Centers (SOICs) within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) structure in Afghanistan; however, their practices are only institutionalized locally. Civil affairs and special operations units have consistently and effectively found ways to address civil information requirements, but their tactics, techniques and procedures are not a part of doctrine for general purpose forces. This dilemma is partly caused by doctrinal and cultural resistance in the intelligence community and throughout the DoD.

In January 2010, U.S. Joint Forces Command J2 hosted an Intelligence Training Requirements Workshop with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Combatant Commands, services and intelligence combat support organizations to discuss common issues concerning intelligence support to Irregular Warfare. The consensus was that IW support required a fundamental culture shift in how we view civil information within the intelligence mission. As a result of that workshop, the Joint Irregular Warfare Center (JIWC) partnered with USJFCOM J2 and embarked on a comprehensive review of intelligence processes to determine the best response to those identified issues. The first phase of this joint project, “Intelligence and Information in Irregular Warfare” (I2IW), researched various directives, doctrinal publications, academic works, and professional articles. Among the findings of this project were that first, intelligence does not adequately support commanders’ requirements in Irregular Warfare (IW) operation, and second, improvements to doctrine have not been institutionalized across the joint force. In January of 2011, the second phase of the project, the Civil Information Fusion Concept (CIFIC), was designed to capture lessons learned from the various non-doctrinal organizations that *most successfully* prioritize civil information, to distil those best practices, and to address these emerging requirements and tasks against any JTF mission whether focused on military operations or Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HADR). The intention of this article is to propose a new framework to fuse and integrate Civ/Mil information and intelligence.

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The CIFIC proposes the “big tent” approach that incorporates the organizations gathering civil information (e.g. civil affairs, intelligence, Human Terrain System (HTS), Military Training Teams (MTT), Atmospheric Teams, operational patrols, government agencies) and is the place where the entirety of the information gathered by those organizations is fused, analyzed and distributed. The CIFIC is not redundant, on the contrary it creates an environment where otherwise stove-piped information sources can collaborate and consolidate. It acts as a force-multiplier by flattening operational hierarchies and developing a culture of civil information sharing across responsibilities and organizations.

The overwhelming success of this project has been to demonstrate a new way of looking at information and intelligence and the natural synergy between the two. This also provides commanders a range of non-material solutions to more effectively synchronize the requirements process and establish the gathering of civil information while ensuring a synthesis with intelligence under a cross-functional team. While the CIFIC concept is widely supported by a large and growing community of interest, some of the conclusions and recommendations have been controversial. Among the most controversial proposals are the assertion that military intelligence should be involved in the routine gathering and processing of unclassified civil information, traditionally left to the Civil Affairs units. Another is the use of intelligence analysts to conduct journalist-like interviews under the functional capability of *Analyst-Interviewers*. Finally, the recommendation for wide-spread adoption of a framework that allows intelligence personnel to work in a collaborative environment with all available partners – most specifically non-DoD, coalition and host nation personnel – to build a *more* thorough understanding of the civil environment. These proposals will not only test established doctrine but demand a change to future doctrine, organization and training.

Intelligence professionals need to stop thinking about civil information and information sources as *Non-Traditional*, but rather, as the *New Traditional* method of acquiring critical data needed to provide a complete operational picture for the Joint Force (JTF) Commander. Current doctrine does highlight the importance of gaining an understanding of the entire operational environment, but few discuss the specific requirement to fuse intelligence and information to best advise the JTF Commander. Even more lacking is any cross-functional guidance that addresses the methods of gathering, integrating and disseminating the finished data. Population-centric information is a top priority for the commander – how a population thinks, feels and reacts – but it is not the type of information that traditional intelligence collection assets are optimized to gather. The Intelligence Community (IC) needs to support the development of civil information requirements, prioritize them, allow for organizational changes that can address requirements and deliver that information to the right people. This will nearly always require partnering with civil affairs, tactical units, other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to both gather and disseminate that information.

The CIFIC is modeled after a series of successful organizations using best practices and lessons learned from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC) Information Dominance Center (IDC), Stability Operations Information Centers (SOICs), United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) Intelligence and Knowledge Development (IKD), and United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) Haiti HADR effort. These organizations were set up to address the civilian population information requirements and integrate into intelligence and operational planning cycles. The CIFIC is also modeled on processes and architectures such as the Joint Civil Information Management (J-CIM) Process and the Joint

Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE). The following are general best practices from the organizations pertaining to the construction of a CIFIC:

- All organizations, no matter the organizational level (from tactical to strategic) were **inherently cross-functional** and most were **led by intelligence professionals**
- All relied on **non-intelligence gathering techniques** to fulfill requirements
- All organizations **fused the information gathered with the IC** to some degree
- All organizations appeared to have **both persistent, defined relationships** with mission partners, **as well as ad hoc relationships** with mission partners
- All organizations **developed tailored products** to meet a variety of requirements
- All organizations **created architectures** to store and display information in a variety of ways to meet the capabilities of different partners, both military and civilian

The CIFIC strength is its ability to adapt to the JTF mission and to task organize and integrate a variety of cross-functional partners. Against the backdrop of a HADR mission in a predominantly agricultural country, a representative from the Department of Agriculture or Commerce would be as essential as a DoD intelligence analyst reporting on the security situation.

[From this point on, the term *CIFIC* will refer to the organization formed to carry out the *Civil Information Fusion Concept*.]

Using guidelines from best practices, the CIFIC can be configured based on commander's intent and the operational requirements. The information requirements for conducting population-centric operations will vary and available resources may differ from unit to unit and mission to mission.

The CIFIC can meet the variety of mission requirements because:

- **The CIFIC is adaptable** – The CIFIC may be in the form of a center, cell, or element, depending on echelon, operational needs and available manning. It can be used for any type of operation because the basic function of any CIFIC remains consistent.
- **The CIFIC is scalable** – The CIFIC can be responsive to any type of operation or phase of operation at any echelon.
- **The CIFIC is a repeatable process** – As a change in operation occurs, the CIFIC can adapt with it, but will still be best suited to provide constant, valuable information to the warfighter.

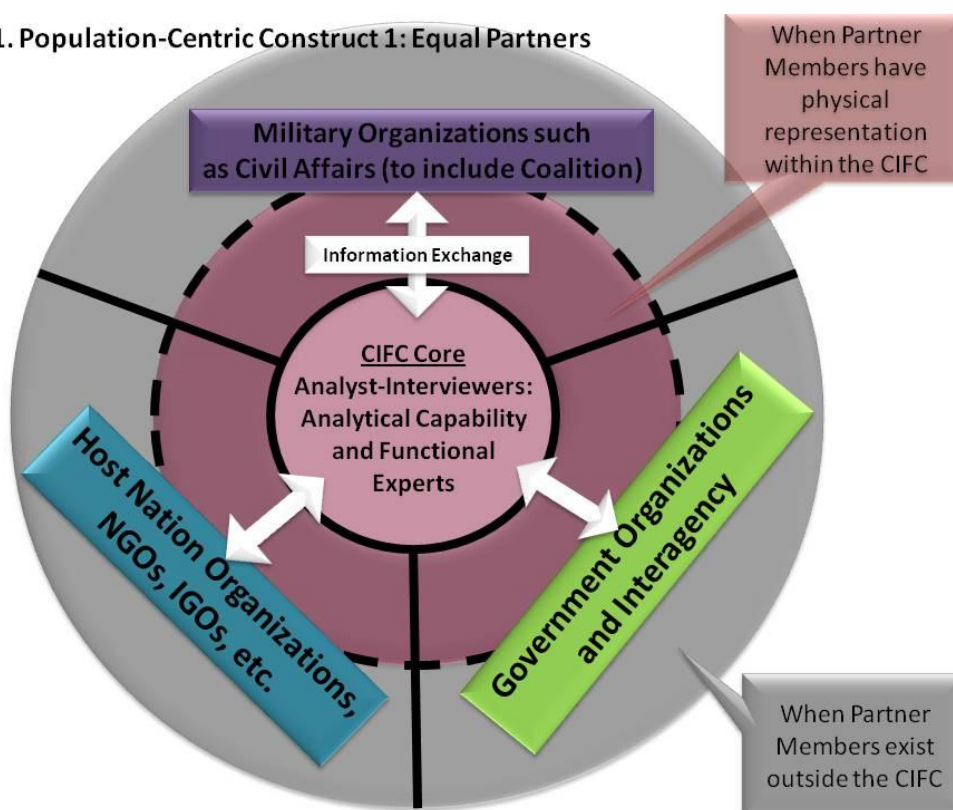
While there would be a core DoD element to a CIFIC, other participants may include Departments of State, Treasury, Commerce, Transportation, Homeland Security, U.S. Agency

for International Development (USAID), and host nation government officials. Additionally, gaining participation from Non-Government organizations (NGOs), other international aid agencies, and private corporations is critical. Addressing this need in a doctrinal versus non-doctrinal method is essential to developing new and trusting relationships in this cross-functional environment. Regardless of the exact make-up of the CIFIC, information should be gathered from nearly any information source that has contact with the population, whether military, government or NGO. Based on best practices, the following constructs may be used to form the baseline organization for the CIFIC.

Population-Centric Construct 1: Equal Partners

This construct is useful when the CIFIC needs to include partner members such as military, U.S. government, multinational, NGOs, and host nation organizations. The purpose is to collaborate and coordinate information gathering and sharing with all relevant organizations. In this scenario, the CIFIC will be made up of many equal partners. This construct can also be used during crisis response operations, such as HADR, where “success...lies in the military’s ability to partner and support a number of interagency, United Nations (UN), NGO, and private volunteer organizations (PVO). Collaboration between such organizations in HADR can only occur in unclassified environments.”¹

Figure 1. Population-Centric Construct 1: Equal Partners

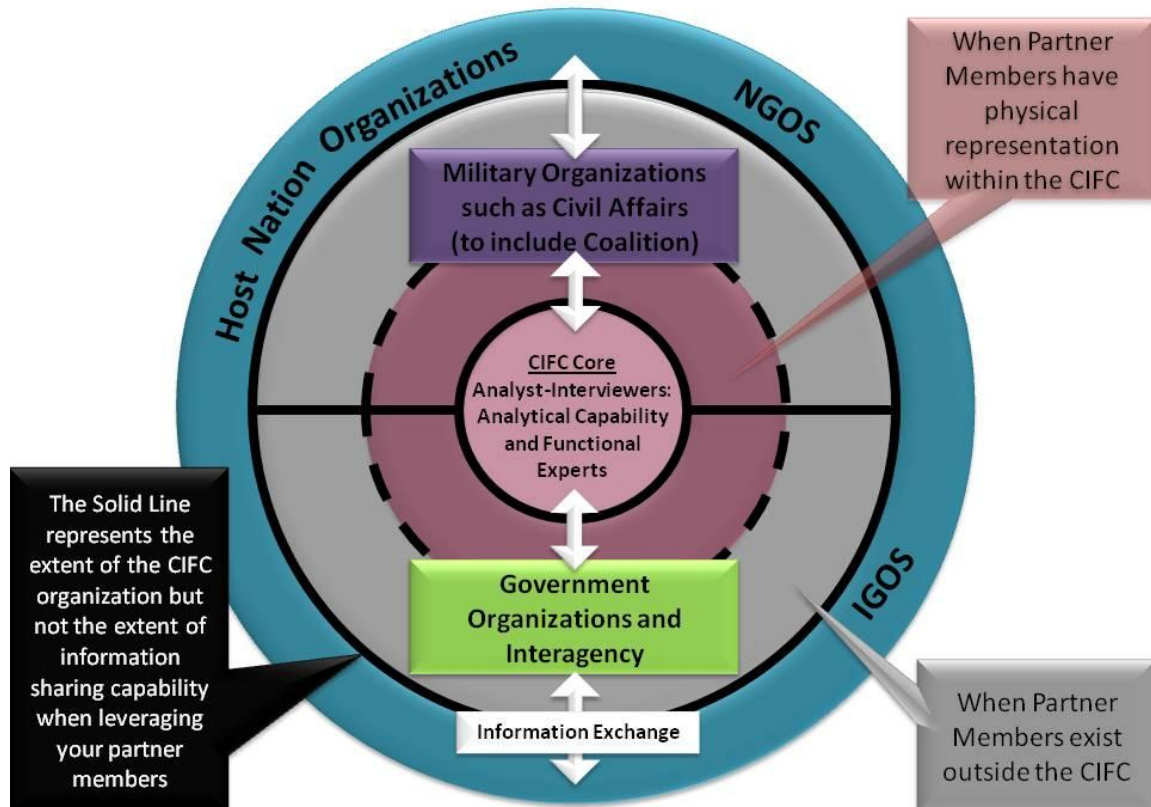


¹ Robert Hulslander, *Considerations for Intelligence Support to Large Scale Humanitarian Assistance – Disaster Relief Operations: Observations from Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE*; Joint Center for Operational Analysis Journal, Volume XII, Issue 2 (Summer 2010), 17.

Population-Centric Construct 2: Military/Government Conduit to NGO

This construct is set up when NGOs may not be willing or able to directly collaborate with the military and the CIFIC only has direct partnership with varying military units (to include multinational partners) and interagency organizations. In this scenario, partner members will be primarily from the IC, U.S. and/or multinational military forces and other government organizations. While many NGOs may not be willing or able to directly engage with the CIFIC during operations, they may be willing to form information sharing relationships with other military organizations such as civil affairs or medical personnel.

Figure 2. Population-Centric Construct 2: Military/Government Conduit to NGO



Forming the CIFIC

To form the baseline organization for the CIFIC, the intelligence structure within both tactical and JTF headquarter elements provide a ready-made baseline to support the command and control (C2), tasking, gathering/collection, processing, exploitation and dissemination (TG/CPED) and fusion of data. The organic intelligence unit already has personnel assigned who are trained in trend analysis, information fusion, predictive analysis and the other skills required to conduct civil information fusion; however, commanders should not limit the CIFIC manning to intelligence personnel. In 2007 when the 10th Mountain Division created what they called Intelligence Support to Non-Lethal Operations, they started with a core of intelligence analysts, but included many other soldiers. "We assumed risk but we wanted to make an investment in Soldiers with proven critical thinking skills and educational backgrounds. The section was not rank driven. The intent was to put individuals with demonstrated critical

thinking skills together, assign them focus areas, and then conduct research with little guidance.”²

Based on this best practice, the CIFIC should be formed with a core analytical capability performing the function of Analyst-Interviewer; however, its effectiveness is highly dependent upon a cross-functional framework. Around this core, the commander can then assign additional personnel with the same analytical capability, but also bring specific expertise in political, economic, social, infrastructure, and information environments. The CIFIC should contain experts in a variety of functional areas important to the mission, such as telecommunications, medical capabilities, agriculture, socio-cultural and power generation to name a few. It should also include personnel with different specialties, such as civil affairs, operations, logistics, and information operations. This provides the CIFIC with a comprehensive view of the civil environment and provides expertise in guiding the gathering of information and its analysis. It also helps solidify partnerships outside of DoD by providing credibility. For example, an economics or finance expert will know what questions to ask about local banking practices, and have an easier time gathering the information.

Information Gathering

The role of the Analyst-Interviewer is to conduct the majority of the information gathering and processing. This is an expansion of the traditional role of the intelligence analyst. As envisioned in “*Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*,” these analysts should be “information integrators, vacuuming up data already collected by military personnel or gathered by civilians in the public realm and bringing it back to a centralized location.”³ While academics, civil affairs officers and training teams are critical members of the CIFIC and provide expertise in a particular group or culture, it is the Analyst-Interviewer who is trained to consolidate and analyze the information for relevance to mission, operations and end state. Analyst-Interviewers that have experience in specific functional areas should share that expertise with the overall CIFIC to refine requirements and ensure the information being collected is of value.

The Analyst-Interviewer will not be a source handler, nor do they simply submit requirements into an established collection process. The Analyst-Interviewer has more of a journalist-like mindset and approach, gathering information from a variety of sources using research, interview and observation skills to complete a coherent picture of the civil environment.

The first step in the information gathering process is to consolidate and analyze information that has already been gathered. Research provides the basis for the Analyst-Interviewer’s initial picture of the civil environment. It is this basis that identifies the gaps to be filled by interviews and observation. Prior to deploying to an area, the CIFIC personnel should provide their commander a baseline assessment and identify the gaps that need to be filled. Analyst-Interviewers should identify any individuals currently in the operational area who can provide currency to the data being gathered. When a unit is scheduled to replace another in an ongoing operation, the unit currently operating in the deployment area will be a primary source

² COL George Franz, USA, LTC David Pendall, USA, and LTC Jeffery Steffen, USA. “Intelligence Support to Nonlethal Operations,” *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, PB 34-10-3 (July-September 2010), 9.

³ Paul D. Batchelor, Michael T. Flynn and Matt Pottinger, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*. (Center for a New American Security. March), 17.

for information. During a deployment, research will focus on any updates to the existing sources such as new media reports or database updates. Research will focus on identified gaps and specific Request for Information (RFIs) that are developed during operations.

The second step in the information gathering process is to identify and interview personnel who have regular contact and relationships with the civilian population and local government. Interviewing people in other organizations is more efficient, effective and safer than either asking them to write additional reports or arranging meetings and interviews with the local population, most of whom will already have established relations with groups in the coalition. The CIFIC (and the individual Analyst-Interviewer) must develop a tailored and enduring relationship with each organization that interacts with the population in their area of responsibility or otherwise has access to the required data. The way that the CIFIC interacts with those organizations depends on the command relationship between groups and must be established as soon as the CIFIC is created.

- Partner Members - Individuals from outside units, organization and companies who are actually embedded, part time or full time in the CIFIC.
- Primary Organizations – Primary organizations are those groups that the CIFIC talks directly to in order to gather information. This includes those organizations that have established relationships with the CIFIC or where the CIFIC can establish a permanent relationship. This includes subordinate commands, other military units operating in the area, coalition forces, and official government organizations.
- Secondary Organizations – Secondary organizations are those organizations with which the CIFIC has an indirect relationship. The CIFIC may have a secondary relationship because it might be more difficult to establish permanent relationships with these organizations. The CIFIC may not have any other way to contact some organizations besides through a primary organization. The CIFIC may have a secondary relationship due to the following reasons:
 - Some of these organizations will be unwilling or unable to directly contact the CIFIC, being wary of being seen as a part of the military coalition.
 - Some, not being collocated with the military will have no way to contact analysts other than private phones or commercial email.
 - Many will have an ongoing relationship with a military organization that is already available as a primary source for the CIFIC.

The CIFIC may not be aware of all the organizations that have access to the population. Often small NGOs are formed in response to a crisis and are not a part of the overall architecture of the major relief groups or information gathering network. When forming relationships, the Analyst-Interviewer, working with the Civ/Mil structure, should consistently inquire about other organizations with connections to the local population. It is imperative to recognize that access to the local population is often challenging and the Analyst-Interviewers need to work through those organizations that have already established relationships.

The third step in the information gathering process is to directly observe the civil environment. This may be necessary when the Analyst-Interviewer has remaining information gaps after steps one and two have been exhausted. Observation can include: participating in a

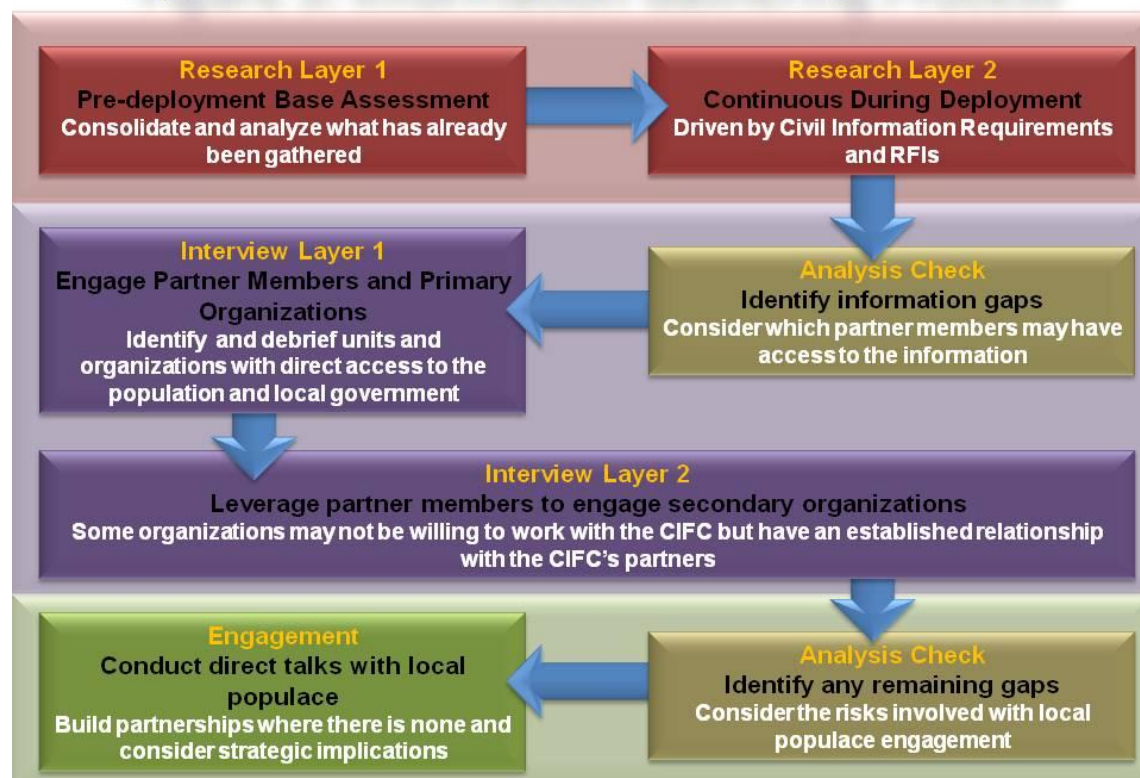
key leader engagement, patrolling a marketplace, visiting a local hospital, etc. Compared to interviewing primary organizations, direct observation by the Analyst-Interviewer is a relatively inefficient way of gathering information, but sometimes is necessary. Some of the issues with direct engagement are:

- Direct observation is often redundant and places a burden on the population to provide information to multiple coalition groups.
- Interviewing certain host nation government key leaders may not be authorized without prior approval of the Ambassador or Political Advisor.
- In areas where hostile forces are present, direct observation increases security risks.

These considerations should not completely deter the Analyst-Interviewer from directly observing their area of responsibility. Seeing things in person provides a more complete picture of the people and environment.

The *New Traditional* method of gathering information is built upon the necessity of establishing enduring relationships with civil information sources across the operational environment. To build trust among partners, all CIFIC members must reflect honesty and reliability, critical to creating and maintaining relationships. This process must review information sharing relationships and restrictive policies; and be open to sharing data important to a local organization, tribal council, NGO or coalition partner organization. Many information sources (such as NGOs) are not required to provide information to the CIFIC, but will do so if they see that there are other benefits to be gained for themselves and their overall mission.

Figure 3. Information Gathering Process



The New Standard

Current operational thought says every individual and asset is a sensor and collector of information. If this is true, there must be an organization and a structure that consolidates, analyzes, fuses, and disseminates the vast amount of information and intelligence that is being gathered in order for the Commander to have the latest, best data to make decisions and to form the basis for action. What has been known for quite some time is that information gathered at the lowest level is strategically critical because “[t]he soldier or development worker on the ground is usually the person best informed about the environment and the enemy... Ground units, PRTs [Provincial Reconstruction Teams], and everyone close to the grassroots bears a double burden in a counterinsurgency; they are at once the most important consumers and suppliers of information.”⁴

The Civil Information Fusion Concept addresses the importance of building information gathering capability inherent in tactical operations into the strategic backbone of operational planning. Senior leaders, decision-makers, planners, operators and intelligence professionals know the importance of requesting civil information and the wisdom in using it as well as the peril if it’s ignored. An inclusive environment where information is shared within a diverse community is key to developing a more thorough understanding and comprehensive picture for the operational decision-maker. The key to the CIFIC is in its flexibility, providing the commander with the authority to rearrange existing force structures to meet their information needs without directing the specifics of how that response will be carried out. The future success of this endeavor no longer lies with the battlefield innovator, the CIFIC framework must become a standard of doctrine, training, policy and implementation that provides the enduring process and support for the success of the civil and military information and intelligence partnership.

Martin Lindenmayer is a Senior Intelligence Officer with the Defense Intelligence Agency and a retired Navy Captain specializing in intelligence support to Special Operations. During his 32 years of government service his assignments have included USSOCOM, USEUCOM, USSOUTHCOM, NATO/IFOR, Operation Northern Watch and prior to his assignment at JIWC he served as Chief, Collection Operations Group and Collection Manager, USAFRICOM. Since 2001, Mr. Lindenmayer has had numerous deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, several countries in Africa including CFTF-HOA, Philippines and other areas in support of OIF/OEF and has served in a variety of SOF and conventional organizations supporting technical collection operations against CT and COIN targets.

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⁴ Ibid.